



May 2026 newsletter

Council Meeting

Design Review
Efficiency Ordinance
Tuesday, May 12, 5 p.m.
Council Chambers, City Hall

Council Appeal Meeting

Wednesday, May 13, 3 p.m.
Egan Homestead House Appeal
31526 Valido Road
Council Chambers, City Hall

Charm House Tour

Sunday, May 17
12 noon-5 p.m.
Start at Festival Entrance

Heritage Month Celebration

Ice Cream Social
Saturday, May 30
12-3 p.m.
Laguna Beach
Historical Society
278 Ocean Avenue

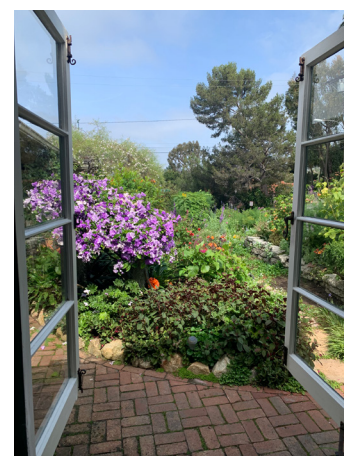
Charm House
Appreciation Dinner
Monday, June 7
5:30 p.m.

Methodist Church
21632 Wesley Dr.

Charm House Tour — Sunday May 17



This year we treat our guests to intimate experiences of the quiet charm that so endears us and other Laguna enthusiasts to our beautiful village by the sea. In historic central village and Woods Cove, we'll see quaint cottages lovingly cared for by long-time owners, and properties that



inspired new owners to enhance and develop their home's potential while remaining true to the

character of their neighborhoods. These are homes and gardens that reward those who slow down and look closely.

Around every corner is another detail worth noticing, another story worth telling.



**Join the tour Sunday
May 17** at the Festival of Arts frontage at 650 Laguna Canyon Road. Busses will leave



starting at noon. The last bus leaves at 3:30. Tour ends at 5 p.m.

Purchase tickets now at VillageLaguna.org

On Monday June 7, 5:30 p.m. at the Methodist Church hall, 21632 Wesley Drive, we will have a special dinner/general meeting to honor the owners of the beautiful homes on the tour and thank all the volunteers who make the tour possible.

Please join us, RSVP at villagelagunainfo@gmail.com

DRB Efficiency Ordinance and Appeal Fees Limit Neighbor Input

Once again the city is proposing revisions to the Design Review Board (DRB) processes that will limit resident input, this time under the heading of the Design Review Efficiency Ordinance and the Master Fee Schedule items.

These changes will be heard at the Tuesday May 12 Council meeting which begins at 5 p.m.

The proposed new fees include \$4,500 to appeal a Design Review Board or Planning Commission decision to Council, a raise from the current \$2500 fee. Wasn't it only "yesterday" that these fees were \$750? In addition, a new fee for appeal of Administrative decisions to the Planning Commission or Design Review Board is proposed to be \$2500! Protecting the public interest and responding to the deluge of proposed changes that threaten the character of our town becomes prohibitively expensive with these outrageous increases. Speak out please!

Amid the 62 pages of the ordinance there are important changes that will reduce public participation in decisions regarding our living environments:

- **Some projects that used to be considered by DRB will be exempt. These include:**
 1. Buildings less than 16' high with setbacks 20% more than usually required.
 2. Landscaping less than 16' high in the buildable area, 6' in rear and side yards, and 4' high in front yards.
 3. Swimming pools elevated less than 3' above adjacent grade.
 4. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
 5. Any project not called out as requiring Design Review.
- **Some projects that used to be considered by DRB will be sent to Administrative Design Review (AdminDR). These include:**
 1. Modifications to historic structures including replacement of doors, windows, siding and addition of porches.
 2. Revocable encroachment permits.
 3. Decks, slabs or patios more than 3' above grade.
 4. Air conditioners, pool and spa equipment.

Admin DR decisions can be appealed to the DRB or Planning Commission, but appeals will be costly. The Admin DR hearing officer used to send projects with unresolved issues to DRB without requiring an appeal. This reasonable alternative to expensive appeals should be reinstated.

Postcard notices about pending permits at Admin DR will be sent out as they are now, but if a concerned neighbor doesn't formally request a hearing within 15 days of the postcard being mailed out, the project will be automatically approved with no hearing at all. Review of plans requires a visit to city hall, during regular working hours. On vacation? At work during the day? Didn't get the post card in time? Too bad. No hearing will be held and project will be approved.

There's so much more. See the staff report and the draft ordinance in the agenda bill.

Email your City Council at citycouncil@lagunabeachcity.net

Write and speak to Council to comment on these changes to Design Review.

Trees Lost at Promenade

The eucalyptus street trees were essential components of the beauty and history of lower Forest Avenue. The approved drawings said they were to be preserved. Construction destabilized them and the city determined they had to be removed. This painful process lacked meaningful communication with the public and was a tragic impact of a project that was allowed to proceed without environmental review. Now we are finding that saline ground water conditions not far below the surface present challenges to re-establishing trees. **Let's not continue to make mistakes that endanger the beloved historic features of our town.**

Council to Decide Egan Homestead House Fate May 13

Were you sad about losing the trees on Forest Avenue? At least it's not too late to save this important part of Laguna history. Speak up now.

Write citycouncil@lagunabeachcity.net and speak on Wednesday afternoon, May 13, at 3 p.m. The Egan appeal is first on the agenda.

The staff report is out. They support demolition. Staff maintains the Egan house, the last remaining homestead house in Orange County, is not a historic resource. They say, "Staff acknowledge that differing conclusions were reached by qualified historic consultants regarding the status of the property. However, the majority of the consultant firms determined that the property does not qualify as a historic resource."



Let's take a vote among the historic consultants, shall we?

The city-hired consultant HRG found the property eligible for the National and California Historic Registers. The developer hired two consultants (Chronicle and ESA) who found it was not. The city also paid another consultant, GPA, to evaluate the other reports. However, GPA did not do any research of their own or even visit the property. They formed their opinion based on their evaluation of the evidence submitted by the other consultants, apparently giving the same weight to the opinions of the developer-paid consultants as to the city-paid consultant HRG.

Do you think that the developer-paid consultant reports would have ever been submitted to the city if they had said the Egan property qualified as a historic resource? Why did their opinion, weighted in favor of the developer's interest, deserve to be considered equally in such a "vote?"

In addition, staff did not even consider the report by pro bono historical consultant Francesca Smith who stated in her report,

"HRG's conclusion is correct. The subject property is eligible for listing in the National and California registers under criteria A and 1, for its association with the Homestead Act, at the local level of significance. The Egan Cottage also possesses sufficient integrity to communicate that significance."

Why is this so important? It's not just the pending tragic loss of this homestead property that has such an important story to tell. It furthers a continuing policy that thwarts preservation. This kind of faulty analysis is being used to find a reason why it's ok to demolish yet another historic resource. The story book cottage at 434 Aster, the Blue House at the Presbyterian Church, now the Egan Homestead House—gone? If a house built by a homesteader, the last remaining such structure in Orange County, begun in 1909, and the oldest house in South Laguna, isn't historical, will any historical resources be safe from demolition with the approval of our council?





PO Box 1309
Laguna Beach, CA 92652

FIRST CLASS MAIL

Remembering Ken Frank

City managers are known for their polite deference to council members and Ken Frank normally played that role in public, even though behind the scenes he skillfully steered the council to implement policies he felt were sound for the city. A lean budget was top priority and so any decisions that had financial impacts were avoided. When South Laguna was annexed he negotiated continued county responsibility for the South Laguna beaches to avoid city expense. Proposals for city takeover of Laguna Canyon Road or Coast Highway never made it past his scrutiny to be considered by council. A strong advocate for preservation of open space, he was effective in negotiating acquisitions. At one council meeting the idea of a dog park at the General Telephone property in the canyon was raised. At the next council meeting he announced that he had negotiated a lease on the property for \$1 a year—the first step in making the dog park a reality. One evening the council was seriously considering a proposal related to open space and private access. Ken had to draw the line, saying forcefully, “If you adopt this tonight you will be violating decades of city policy.” The measure was not approved. Adept in using all the tools of his position, inscrutable and supremely competent, he left us a sound city surrounded by a blanket of preserved open space.

Support Village Laguna—2026

Your participation and dedication are so important in keeping Laguna Beach the city we love. Please join us in preserving our village character and protecting our historic and natural resources.



Donate at VillageLaguna.org or complete the coupon below and send your check to Village Laguna



Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ **Email** _____

(please send me my newsletter by regular mail____by e-mail____)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer \$250/family |
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Mail to: Village Laguna PO BOX 1309 Laguna Beach, CA 92652

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